



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE DEPORTS NEW YORK STREET GANG MEMBER *Gang Member With Violent Criminal Background Removed to Mexico*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – A man who admitted his affiliation with a drug-dealing street gang in Albion, N.Y., has been deported to his native Mexico, officials with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced today.

Samir Hernandez-Sanchez, 22, was removed from the United States by officers of ICE's Detention and Removal Operations (DRO) on March 28 after he admitted his membership in the "Vatos Locos" street gang in an interview as he was being processed into a federal detention facility. An ICE officer inquired into the "VLP" tattoo on Hernandez-Sanchez's left hand. He explained that it stood for "Vatos Locos Por Siempre," or "Vatos Locos Forever," and that other members of the gang had similar markings.

In November 2004, Hernandez-Sanchez was arrested by local police in Albion after he assaulted his girlfriend and broke a window at her apartment in October. Given his status as a citizen of Mexico and his criminal background, Hernandez-Sanchez was turned over to ICE for deportation.

Hernandez-Sanchez told ICE agents that his gang's activities involved the use and sale of drugs. In addition, Hernandez-Sanchez has a criminal history that includes two prior convictions for assault.

"Samir Hernandez-Sanchez had a history of criminal behavior and gang activity, making him a prime target for removal," said William Cleary, ICE's DRO Field Office Director for Buffalo. "ICE is committed to restoring integrity to the nation's immigration system and protecting public safety by targeting gang members and other dangerous criminals who may pose a threat to our communities."

ICE has recently stepped up its enforcement efforts against gang members. In March, ICE launched "Operation Community Shield," an enforcement initiative targeting violent street gangs in six cities nationwide. To date, Operation Community Shield has lead to more than 135 arrests of "Mara Salvatrucha" (MS-13) gang members, including more than 30 in the State of New York. During the 2004 Fiscal Year, ICE removed more than 600 criminal aliens from the Buffalo area.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.